



State of Wisconsin  
Governor Scott Walker

## Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Ben Brancel, Secretary

**DATE:** July 2, 2013

**TO:** Board of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

**FROM:** Ben Brancel, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection  
John Petty, Administrator, Agricultural Resource Management Division

**SUBJECT:** Report on AEAs recommended for designated in 2013

The Agricultural Enterprise Area evaluation team met on May 22, 2013 to review the four AEA petitions received during this petition cycle. The team recommended the designation of three new AEAs and the modification of one existing AEA. More details about the recommended areas can be found in Attachment A.

*Table: AEAs recommended for designation*

Proposed Name	Size (modified size)	AEA Location
Fields, Waters, and Woods AEA	41,089	<i>Ashland County:</i> Towns of Marengo, Ashland, White River; <i>Bayfield County:</i> Town of Kelly; <i>Bad River Reservation</i>
Heart of America's Dairyland AEA*	66,467 (164,451)	<i>Clark County:</i> Towns of Mayville, Colby, Unity, Beaver, Loyal; <i>Marathon County:</i> Towns of Brighton, Hull, Frankfort, Holton, Johnson
SW Lead Mine Region AEA	102,325	<i>Lafayette County:</i> Towns of Gratiot, Monticello, Shullsburg, Wiota
Town of Grant AEA	25,908	<i>Dunn County:</i> Towns of Grant, Colfax, Sand Creek, Otter Creek; <i>Chippewa County:</i> Towns of Auburn, Cooks Valley

\*Modification

### Designation steps

Designation of the recommended AEAs will be completed by departmental order, and notification of the order will be posted in the state newspaper. Following notification, the designation will take effect on January 1st, 2014. Two of the recommended AEAs are currently in the process of updating or amending the county farmland preservation plan to ensure eligibility with program requirements. Designation orders for those AEAs will be completed following plan certification, anticipated to occur in October or November.

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**Farmland preservation agreements in AEAs**

Following designation, there will be 25 AEAs in the state totaling nearly 750,000 acres (Attachment B). The 25 AEA are located in portions of 19 counties, 72 towns and the Bad River Reservation. Nearly 1,000 landowners have signed the petitions requesting designation as an AEA. Hundreds of letters of support from other landowners, neighboring cities and villages, business owners and other interested parties have also been received. In 2011 and 2012, the department enrolled over 270 farmland preservation agreements covering about 61,000 acres. So far in 2013, the department has received almost 90 agreement applications covering an additional 15,000 acres.

**2014 AEA petition cycle**

The state currently has the authority to designate up to 1 million acres as AEAs. It is the agency's goal to designate the remaining 250,000 acres in the 2014 petition cycle. The release of the request for petitions for the 2014 cycle is planned for early fall of 2013.

**Next steps**

The department continues to encourage landowners to apply for farmland preservation agreements. We also continue to explore opportunities to provide assistance to the AEAs to implement activities that support farmland preservation and agricultural economic development identified in the AEA petitions. An annual status update will be completed to gather information from AEAs designated in the prior three cycles. In addition, we are working to strengthen the AEA network through increased communication and information sharing.

Attachment A: Summary of the 2013 AEAs recommended for designation

Attachment B: Map of designated and recommended AEAs

## **Attachment A: Summary of the 2013 AEAs Recommended for Designation**

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### **FIELDS, WATERS AND WOODS**

#### **Overview**

- ◆ Ashland and Bayfield Counties: Towns of Marengo, Ashland, White River, Kelly; Bad River Reservation
- ◆ 41,089 acres
- ◆ 8 petitioners
- ◆ Dairy, beef

#### **Goals**

- ◆ Maintain agricultural land base necessary to support continued production, and ongoing growth and diversification of the agricultural economy.
- ◆ Minimize conflict between agricultural and residential land-use through outreach, education, land-use planning, and targeted infrastructure development.
- ◆ Foster diversification to include increased grain, vegetable and specialty crop production
- ◆ Strengthen current livestock agriculture
- ◆ Explore option to reduce fuel and protein expenses through production and processing of oilseed crops
- ◆ Transition management of the farms to the next generation
- ◆ Increase production efficiency through facility modernization
- ◆ Continue to develop managed intensive grazing operations for production of grass-fed beef

#### **Items of Note**

- ◆ Established joint marketing effort sustained by producers to sell grass-fed beef, lamb and poultry direct to customers through the South Shore Meats label.
- ◆ Adoption of managed intensive grazing by area producers.
- ◆ Investments made to add facilities to produce vegetables, fruits, honey, maple syrup and livestock that allow the products to be marketed directly to consumers.
- ◆ Increased production of oilseed crops and other grains.
- ◆ Value-added processing ventures are underway including production of straw pellets for animal bedding and soil improvements

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### **HEART OF AMERICA'S DAIRYLAND AEA (2011; Modified 2012; Modified 2013)**

#### **Overview**

- ◆ Clark and Marathon Counties, Town of Mayville, Colby, Unity, Beaver, Loyal, Brighton, Hull, Frankfort, Holton, Johnson
- ◆ 66,467 (164,451) acres
- ◆ 60 (271) petitioners
- ◆ Dairy and cash crops

#### **Goals**

- ◆ To preserve and promote the agricultural economy and its social, cultural, and economic heritage
- ◆ Retain and enhance existing businesses
- ◆ Assure production capacity and protect food security
- ◆ Assess natural resource quality and quantity and assist farmers with soil and water conservation to protect environmental resources

- ♦ Provide tools to control population density and control residential and farming conflicts
- ♦ Develop joint marketing opportunities for local products
- ♦ Pursue new technologies that provide management and economic benefits to agricultural producers that efficiently utilizes the economies of scale created by large blocks of contiguous farmland

#### Items of Note

- ♦ Extensive public outreach process inclusive of diverse producers and diverse backgrounds
- ♦ Area number one for dairy production in the state and also supports vegetables, fruit, nursery and bedding plants
- ♦ Existence of strong rural economy to support designated area and the dairy industry
- ♦ Strong interest in protecting farmland through farmland preservation agreements
- ♦ Proximity to existing agricultural development activities including the Central WI Agribusiness Innovation Center, and an agribusiness park
- ♦ Recipient of a 2013 Top Rural Development Initiative Award from Wisconsin Rural Partners

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### SOUTHWEST LEAD MINE REGION AEA (2013)

#### Overview

- ♦ Lafayette County: Towns of Gratiot, Monticello, Shullsburg, Wiota
- ♦ 102,325 acres
- ♦ 133 petitioners
- ♦ Dairy and cash crops

#### Goals

- ♦ Support multi-generational farming by alleviating pressure with high and variable start-up farming costs for younger generations looking to develop agriculture
- ♦ Protect the historic and cultural character of the landscape through use of land use tools
- ♦ Encourage diverse farming practices and diverse land management
- ♦ Protect against development pressure
- ♦ Attract small-scale cottage agricultural industries
- ♦ Develop training opportunities for local workers in bio-product and food-related industry
- ♦ Expand market development for local food processing
- ♦ Develop new products and markets for locally produced, locally branded foods
- ♦ Research and develop products for non-food, bio-industrial products
- ♦ Grow the potential for energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies for on-farm operations and rural areas
- ♦ Establish demonstration projects for innovative and sustainable practices for watershed management and resource conservation

#### Items of Note

- ♦ Strong dairy community, located near 13 different dairy processing plants, several of which are planning or in the process of future investments.
  - ♦ Strong agricultural community with agriculture accounting for 85% of total business sales in the county.
  - ♦ Part of broader initiatives including a vegetable production feasibility study and the regional renewable energy opportunity plan for southwest Wisconsin and dairy clustering
  - ♦ Growing livestock industry in the county.
  - ♦ Numerous conservation projects in the area.
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## **TOWN OF GRANT AEA (2013)**

### **Overview**

- ♦ Dunn and Chippewa Counties; Towns of Grant, Colfax, Sand Creek, Otter Creek, Auburn, Cooks Valley
- ♦ 25,908 acres
- ♦ 15 petitioners
- ♦ Row crops, dairy

### **Goals**

- ♦ Maintain, promote, and develop agricultural infrastructure
- ♦ Preserve and protect farmland from non-agricultural uses
- ♦ Adopt and implement stronger land use protections
- ♦ Develop an agriculture succession plan to reduce or eliminate barriers to business expansion and start-up
- ♦ Identify new markets and uses for agricultural products and by-products
- ♦ Create agricultural business plans to pursue new opportunities

### **Items of Note**

- ♦ Strong legacy of farmland protection.
- ♦ Numerous multi-generational farm families.
- ♦ Corn grown in the AEA marketed to nearby ethanol plant.
- ♦ Strong outreach and education efforts in the area focus on conservation of soil and water resources.



Appendix B: Map of designated and recommended AEAs

# Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs)

July 2013



